DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 113 SP 038 801

AUTHOR Gonzalez, Humberto
TITLE The Teacher Shortage in Texas: How Are School Districts Coping?
PUB DATE 1999-10-05
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference on School University Partnerships (3rd, San Antonio, TX, October 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Diversity (Student); Elementary Secondary Education; Hispanic Americans; Public Schools; School District Size; School District Wealth; School Districts; Teacher Certification; *Teacher Salaries; *Teacher Shortage; Teachers; *Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS Texas

ABSTRACT

This study examined issues affecting teacher shortages in Texas, noting how school districts were dealing with it. The research focused on whether district size, ethnic student makeup, or district property wealth would make a difference in a school district's ability to recruit and retain quality teachers. A two-part questionnaire was mailed to all Texas school districts, and 325 out of 1,078 responded. The questionnaire asked for quantitative data about types of vacancies, percentage of students in various academic programs, starting salaries, extra pay for types of degrees and certification, local incentives and benefits for teachers, strategies for filling vacancies, and conditions under which non-certified teachers were hired. It also asked for qualitative data about the impact of teacher shortage; retaining, recruiting, and mentoring; and strategies the state should implement to guarantee an adequate supply of teachers. Researchers grouped the districts by student population numbers and divided them into categories of wealth and categories of ethnicity (predominantly Hispanic or predominantly white). Results indicated that ethnicity made a significant difference in the number of teaching vacancies. Size also made a significant difference, but wealth had no effect on the number of vacancies school districts reported. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 434 113

The Teacher Shortage in Texas: How Are School Districts Coping?

Dr. Humberto Gonzalez
Texas A&M International University

Paper Presented at the
Third Annual Conference on
School University Partnerships
Texas A&M University System /Texas Education Agency
San Antonio, Texas

October 5, 1999

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Gonzalez

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP038801

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Teacher Shortage In Texas:How Are School Districts Coping?

Dr. Humberto Gonzalez
Texas A&M International University

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that two million new teachers will need to be hired in the next ten years. This number represents an average of 200,000 new teachers annually (Education Week 99). This is happening at a time when only half of beginning teachers stay in the profession longer than five years (Yeager 98). At a time when in Texas, after the 92-93 school year, 15.8 percent of teachers employed left teaching without completing a full year in the profession (TEA,1999). If they make it through the first year, it is estimated that 30% will not stay past the fifth year (Merrow, 1999). Over 20,000 teachers did not return to teach for the 1996-1997 school year (Ryder, 1997).

The long predicted shortages of the eighties are now very much evident (Boorstein 99). How did we get here? What are some of the factors that are aggravating the teacher shortage? At hindsight we can blame such things as apathy towards teachers and the teaching profession, the booming economy, low teacher salaries for beginning teachers, a great number of teachers within retirement age, a teacher retirement system with few incentives for long term commitment up front, tougher certification and testing standards for new teachers, stringent federal and state mandates, the inability of teacher programs to prepare teachers for the trauma of teaching, rising student enrollment, and lastly and probably the most important one, the inability of schools to retain teachers.

The teacher shortage in America and indeed in Texas is having a profound effect on how we attract, prepare, recruit and retain teachers. At a time when a multiplicity of factors exacerbate the shortage, there is growing concern about the quality of education that children are getting. This confrontational dilemma places the quality inspectors against the head count managers if you will. On one side you have the educators who are vested with the day to day operations of schools and whose responsibility it is to fill the slots and find teachers to teach children, at what ever the cost or effort. Its a mission that must be accomplished. This group was the first to broadcast the impending storm of the teacher shortage. As their selection pool dwindled their concern grew to a painful cry for help.

The quality inspectors of course are the proponents for stricter requirements for entry into the field of study and higher standards for certification requirements for teaching. Their conscious dictates that at what ever the cost or effort quality teachers and quality teaching must not be jeopardized and indeed standards raised to insure that the teaching profession is elevated to the level that it so rightly deserves.

The answer is quite simplistic. Both quality and quantity are important and there must be an acceptable balance. The solution on the other hand is quite complicated philosophical views as well as empirical data are fused together to draw parameters of acceptability.

Review of the Literature

The Merrow Report, a not -for-profit corporation in its investigative report titled The Teacher Shortage: A false Alarm presented the following facts about the teacher

shortage:

. Teacher training is a money making venture for most colleges and universities.

. About 30% of those who study to become teachers never do.

. Nearly 50% of those who enter teaching leave within five years.

. In many places teachers can be assigned to teach something they've never studied.

. Teachers who spend only 40% (two out of five classes) of their time teaching "out of field" are not categorized as "teaching out of field."

. American teachers spend about 60 fewer days in school than do their counterparts in Japan but more hours teaching.

. President Clinton says we are facing a major national teaching shortage and that we need 2.2 million new teachers in the next decade. Nearly every President since Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950's has said virtually the same thing (Merrow, 1999).

A recent survey conducted by the National Center For Education Statistics reports that 28 percent of former public school teachers and 33 percent of private school teachers left the classroom and went to work for private business because of better wages, salary or commission (Thomas, 1998). It is a clear indication that teacher salaries are negatively impacting the teacher shortage. Texas, ranks 38th in the country in average teacher pay with roughly a $21,000 starting teacher salary (Sanchez, 1998).

Many teachers are being enticed away to better paying jobs because of a

robust and booming economy. Many of these individuals prepared for teaching careers but never entered the profession. Attractive salaries from competing industries lead them away from teaching (TEA, 1999).

The State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) through its Proposed Framework for Educator Preparation and Certification has recommended sweeping changes in teacher licensing and certification. Through its proposed recommendations an internship period for beginning teachers will be required as well as a five-year renewal of the standard teaching certificate (Ryder, 1997).

The Clinton administration in an effort to demand quality teachers is proposing that schools who receive federal Title I funds phase-out "emergency certification" and "out of field" teaching as a way to put pressure on states to address university teacher preparation programs and school teacher retention issues (Billiteri 1997).

A report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future published September of 1996 reported the following findings:

- More than 25% of new public school teachers in 1991 were either untrained or had not fully met state standards.
- Almost one-fourth of secondary teachers--and more than 30 percent of math teachers--lack even a minor in their main teaching field.
- More than half of the high school students taking the physical sciences are taught by teachers without a minor or major in the subject, as are 27 % of math teachers.
- Students in schools with high minority enrollments have less than a 50-

50 chance of getting science or math teachers with a degree or a license in the field they teach.

Only 500 of the nation's 1,300 schools of education are accredited.

The findings of this report have been used widely by many states to develop radical reforms for tougher standards, stricter licensing and certification requirements (Billitieri 1997).

The Alternative Certification Program in many states has made a positive difference in combating the teacher shortage. Students enrolled in the ACP programs are highly educated and motivated individuals with marketable experience in the business world who may be victims of layoffs and downsizing. Many of them are highly skilled military people looking for new careers. This new breed of educator is for the most part more mature and proving to be invaluable to the education community (Littleton & Holcomb 1994).

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the issues affecting the teacher shortage in this country and specifically Texas. How are Texas school districts coping with the effects of a nation-wide teacher shortage and does district size, student ethnicity or property wealth have any significance on attracting, recruiting or retaining quality teachers?

Research Questions

The research focus was on one question " Does district size, ethnic student make-up or district property wealth make a difference in a school district's ability to

recruit and retain quality teachers?"

The Study

My study examined, in the mist of two forces struggling for dominance, quality versus quantity, how the school districts are coping with the teacher shortage. A two-part teacher shortage questionnaire was developed by the researcher. The questions were derived from the review of the literature. The first part of the questionnaire asked for quantitative data regarding types of vacancies, percentage of students in various academic programs, starting salary for beginning teachers, extra pay for types of degrees and certification, local incentives and benefits for teachers, strategies used to fill vacancies, and conditions under which non-certified teachers are hired.

The second part of the questionnaire asked for qualitative data through the use of open-ended questions about the impact of the teacher shortage, retaining, recruiting, and mentoring as well as what strategies the state should implement to guarantee an adequate supply of teachers.The instrument was checked for content validity, meaning, format and style through feedback from the Texas Education Agency commissioner's staff, who offered several suggestions.

Population and Sample

The population under study were all the school districts in Texas. (N=1,078) The questionnaire was mailed to all school districts. A response rate of 30.1% was received. (N=325) . However since the first phase of this study involved looking at size, wealth and ethnicity, a sample of 19.2% were used to analyze the data. (S=207) Districts with a predominantly Hispanic student population as well as districts with a

predominantly white population were selected for the sample from the responding school districts. For the purpose of this study predominantly was defined as having 70% or more White or Hispanic students.

Methodology

A teacher shortage questionnaire was mailed to all the school districts in Texas and addressed to the superintendent or personnel officer. This population included 1,078 school districts. The districts were asked to respond to questions using 98-99 school year data.

The questionnaire included questions related to the district's number and type of teaching vacancies in regular education, special education, career and technology, bilingual, and specific content areas of math, science, social studies, foreign languages, ESL, fine arts, health and Physical education.

In addition the responding school districts were categorized by size, wealth and ethnicity with data provided by the Texas Education Agency.

Size

The school districts were divided into 9 groups: Group #1 consisted of a student population of 1 to 500; Group #2 consisted of a student population of 501 to 999; Group #3 consisted of a student population of 1,000 to 1,599; Group #4 consisted of a student population of 1,600 to 2,900; Group #5 consisted a student population 3,000 to 4,999; Group #6 consisted of 5,000 to 9,999; Group #7 consisted of a student population of 10,000 to 24,999; Group #8 consisted of a student population of 25,000 to 49,000; and Group #9 consisted a student population of 50,000 or more.

Wealth

Districts were divided into two categories of wealth: Group #1 consisted of school districts whose property tax value was $200,000 or more per student ADA (average daily attendance). Group #2 consisted of school districts whose property tax value was less then $200,000 per student ADA.

Ethnicity

Districts were divided into two categories of ethnicity: Group #1 consisted of school districts who had a predominantly student Hispanic population of 70% or more; Group #2 consisted of school districts who had a predominantly White student population of 70% or more.

Data Analysis

In this study descriptive research methods were used to collect factual information that describes existing phenomena. To answer the research question does ethnicity, size and wealth of a school district have an impact on the recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, a multiple regression between wealth, size, and ethnicity was administered to the data. The results revealed that ethnicity indeed made a difference in the number of teaching vacancies. Size as well made a significance difference, but wealth had no effect on the number of vacancies school districts reported.

In comparing the salaries between predominantly Hispanic school districts and predominantly White school districts the data revealed that a greater percentage of Hispanic school districts offered more stipends in math, science, bilingual and ESL,

however the predominantly White school districts were able to offer higher paying stipends. See Table 1 below.

Table 1. Beginning Teacher Salary and Subject Area Stipends; Comparison between predominantly Hispanic and White school district.

		PHSD (n=34)	PWSD (n=207)
Beginning Teacher Salaries			
average salary	=	$22,884	$22,367
high salary	=	$29,000	$29,309
low salary	=	$19,500	$21,240
Master's Degree Stipend		PHSD (n=20)	PWSD (n=48)
average stipend	=	$1,135	$1,051
high stipend	=	$3,000	$3,500
low stipend	=	$200	$200
Doctorate Degree Stipend		PHSD (n=13)	PWSD (n=17)
average stipend	=	$1,303	$2,131
high stipend	=	$3,750	$5,280
low stipend	=	$500	$300
Math Stipends		PHSD (n=12)	PWSD (n=17)
average stipend	=	$1,100	$1,071
high stipend	=	$2,000	$2,500
low stipend	=	$500	$500
Science Stipends		PHSD (n=9)	PWSD (n=14)
average stipend	=	$900	$1,136
high stipend	=	$2,000	$2,500
low stipend	=	$500	$500
Bilingual Stipends	=	PHSD (n=17)	PWSD (n=6)
average stipend	=	$1,795	$2,517
high stipend	=	$2,000	$8,000
low stipend	=	$400	$500
ESL Stipend		PHSD (n=13)	PWSD (n=7)
average stipend	=	$965	$1,614
high stipend	=	$1,500	$8,000
low stipend	=	$400	$500
Special Education Stipend		PHSD (n=11)	PWSD (n=8)
average stipend	=	$1,273	$1,200
high stipend	=	$3,500	$2,000
low stipend	=	$400	$500

Teacher Salaries and stipends

What is significant in table 1 is that in both areas of bilingual education and english as a second language (ESL) Hispanic school districts are not able to compete with predominantly White school districts with stipends to attract certified teachers. While their need to attract teachers to serve their monolingual and bilingual identified students is greater because of the percentage of Hispanic students they serve, their inability to be competive agravates the inequality.

The same may be said in comparing stidends for math and science. White school districts are able to offer marginally more for certified math and science teachers.

Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions were tabulated and classified as a group response. They are presented in order of frequency and represent the responses of all 207 school districts examined.

Conditions impacting the teacher shortage

1. Low pay and few benefits
    - critical areas that are being affected due to inability to compete with business community: math, science, computer science, foreign languages.
2. Poor working conditions due to:
    - school violence
    - student and teacher safety

- student discipline
- low morale
- low student achievement
- students with behavioral, emotional problems
- very stressful occupation

3. School violence, safety & student discipline
4. Public's apathy towards the teaching profession,
   - unattractiveness of teaching,
   - lack of respect and support for teachers and the teaching profession
   - negative media towards schools
5. Not enough education graduates
   - lack of career guidance by university
   - too few in critical areas, too many in areas not needed
   - inability of universities to attract teachers to the profession
6. Booming economy
   - demand for workers in the business/private sector
   - salary competition in critical areas

Concerns in teacher recruiting

1. Quantity of new teachers
   - certification in critical shortage areas of math, science, Spanish, ESL, bilingual and special education, technology, and minority teachers.

2. Quality of New teachers.

Teachers with the following qualities;

- have good attitude about teaching
- are responsible
- are motivated
- posses self-discipline
- have good trainability
- have good basic ability
- have good values and morals
- are mature
- are student centered
- are committed to the teaching profession

3. Low beginning teacher salaries and benefits

4. Geographic location

- rural areas (remoteness)
- housing
- size of school district

5. Good classroom management skills

- student discipline
- special issues

6 Proper preparation and training

Concerns about teacher retention

1. Low pay and benefits not competitive
2. competing with other wealthier and larger school districts that pay more
3. Teacher burnout
    - stress
    - pressure from parents and students
    - lack of support
    - lack of recognition
    - student discipline
    - negative publicity
4. Geographic Location
    - rural conditions
    - size
5. Losing teachers to private industry
6. How do we keep teachers in the profession?

Strategies that Texas should implement

1. Increase base pay and benefits
    - provide a salary and benefits package funded by the state
    - provide a state funded health insurance for all teachers
    - provide the same benefits and incentives as other state employees
    - strengthen the teacher retirement system so that there is an incentive for a long commitment.

2. Stop mandatory requirements
    - less restrictions on teacher certification
    - tougher certification requirements affect the teacher shortage negatively
    - state should stop micro-managing
3. Provide state scholarships for education majors
4. Provide for a safe working environment
    - bring discipline back to the classroom
    - give teachers real authority to remove disruptive students from the classroom
    - zero tolerance for disruptive behavior
5. Restructure the teacher preparation program at colleges and universities
    - more field based curriculum
    - train more teachers
    - provide career guidance for students to enroll in fields of critical shortage
6. State should support and honor the teaching profession
    - make teaching more attractive
    - help change the image of teachers and teaching

Mentoring

85% of the districts responding reported that they had some type of mentoring system in their schools.

Conclusions

We can conclude from this study that the teacher shortage is impacting all the school districts in Texas regardless of their wealth, size or ethnic make-up . However we can further conclude that school districts who have a predominantly Hispanic student ethnic make-up of 70% or more are more likely to have a more difficult time recruiting and retaining teachers because of their need for more minority teachers in the areas of bilingual education and ESL. Categorically we can also assume that they are not able to compete salary-wise with either the business or more affluent school districts for math, science, and technology skills.

Also that the larger the school district the likelier it is that they will have more vacancies. This we can only speculate to be because of the business community's demand for workers in the areas of math, science and technology that are more prevalent in larger more urbanized areas.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this study the following recommendations are made:

1. Texas Public Policy makers should be sensitive to the teacher needs of all school districts in Texas but specially to those predominantly minority school districts who because of their special needs in serving their student populations are affected to a higher degree by the teacher shortage. When you look at Hispanic drop-out rates, TAAS achievement, high school graduation rates, and college graduation rates for this population, the extra assistance is more then

justifiable.

They are more likely to have a greater percentage of teachers on probation for not passing their ExCET, teaching students as well as a greater percentage of out-of state teachers.

They have significantly more "temporary" substitute teachers who teach on a daily basis until a "permanent" replacement is found. Some of these temporary positions become permanent positions when certified personnel are sometimes never found.

2. It seems that a major factor in the teacher shortage formula is retention. When 30% of college graduates with a teaching certificate actually never teach and when it is estimated that 50% of the teachers will leave the field before their fifth year, the true answer is we really may not have a teacher shortage per se. What we have is the inability of teacher preparation programs and school districts to prepare and guide teachers through their first formative teaching experiences. Strong partnerships between universities and school districts need to be legislated so that teacher induction programs are not left to chance but rather begin during their freshman college year and end during the teachers fifth year of teaching. Doing less would mean condoning an already alarming situation.
3. The state needs to seriously consider providing health insurance and other incentives including a stronger retirement program that will put teachers in line with other state employees and comparable to benefits in the private sector.
4. The beginning teacher salaries need to be raised to a competitive level.

Teachers with special skills and certification should likewise receive state stipends so where they teach should not make a difference.

References

Billitteri, T. (1997). Teacher education:the Issues. CQ Researcher , p 915-922.

Boorstein, M. (1999). More money, warmer welcome for teachers as national shortage looms. http://reporternews.com/texas/teach , September 23, 1999.

Greenspan, E. (1998). Better teachers faster. National Journal , 30 (33), 1932.

Merrow, J. (1999), Teacher shortage: false alarm. The Merrow Report , Learning Matter Inc.

Ryder, J. (1997, October 4). Report says halfs of Texas teachers instruct outside their certification. Abilene Reporter-New , p.1.

Sanchez, C. (1998). Texas teacher groups stake claim to budget windfall, Fort Worth Star-Telegram , pp. 1-4.

Texas Education Agency, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, State Board of Educator Certification. (1999,February). Texas Teacher Recruitment and Retention Study . Austin, Tx: Alanis, F., et al.

Thomas, J. (1998). Educating our future work force. Women in Business, 50 (6), 26-28.

Yeager, M. (1999). Better pay, benefits would help fix shortage. Globe News, http://www.amarillonet.com/stories/090198/new_134-2038.002.shtml, September 1, 1998.

Littleton, M. & Holcomb J. (1994). New routes to the classroom. The American School Board Journal, p. 37-39.